MacPhee_00b intro.qxd 5/21/07 6:16 PM Page 1

INTRODUCTION

Nationalism beyond the Nation-State

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In theory, there is an abyss between nationalism and imperialism;
in practice, it can and has been bridged . . . .
—Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951)

Local and Global

In recent years there has been a sustained renewal of interest in British national identity at popular, political, and academic levels, and strikingly a common feature in each case has been the concern to differentiate between "British" and "English" and define a distinct sense of Englishness. The English flag (the cross of St. George as opposed to the flag of the United Kingdom, the Union Jack) has gained a currency inconceivable even ten years ago; politicians and media pundits have devoted extraordinary amounts of time to arguing about the nature of English identity, or listing which characteristically local landscapes, persons, objects or architecture best stand as icons of Englishness, and lengthy academic studies have been devoted to establishing the distinction between Britishness and Englishness and charting their historical emergence and applicability. For many beyond the shores of the British Isles, the terms "England" and "Britain" appear to be interchangeable synonyms that ultimately name the same thing, and such debates may therefore seem parochial and even eccentric. It is the claim of the present volume that far from being idiosyncratic or self-involved, the question of Englishness and its relationship to British national identity offers an important avenue for thinking about the politics of national identity in our postcolonial and globalized world.

A sense of the complex connection between local and global involved in these terms is evident when one considers the everyday difficulties involved with the terms "English" and "British." Far from being straightforward synonyms, these terms are bound up in a range of distinct but overlapping meanings for inhabitants of the British Isles. Thus, for example, to describe the United Kingdom as "English" may well be a source of

Notes for this section begin on page 20.

MacPhee_00b intro.qxd 5/21/07 6:16 PM Page 2

discomfort for inhabitants of Scotland, Wales, and (even more problematically) Northern Ireland, who may object that this confusion reflects the subordination of other national traditions and the unacknowledged and illegitimate predominance of the English within this "nation of nations." And while many would prefer "British" in this instance, significant numbers in each of these locations would reject this term outright in favor of an alternative national appellation (Scottish, Welsh, Irish). Conversely, in the face of a limited measure of devolution for Scotland, Wales, (and again, even more problematically) Northern Ireland, a widely reported current of opinion has argued that a distinct English identity is required as a response to these other nationalisms. However, the acceptability of such an English identity for all those born in England is by no means straightforward or unproblematic. In certain contexts, the description "English" within popular discourse may connote "white," while to certain speakers a person of South Asian descent born in England, for example, might be described as "Asian." Thus, for many members of ethnic minorities, often the descendants of citizens of the former British Empire who emigrated in the postwar period, the term "English" retains a racial or ethnic coding that makes it inappropriate for them, whereas "British"—often conjoined as in Black British or British Asian—is seen as more inclusive and open. Yet this term is by no means straightforward either: while for non-Europeans the "British" are "European," for many inhabitants of the United Kingdom the terms "British" and "English" are at some deep level opposed to a European identity that is conceived of as distinct and alien.[1]

Two contradictory visions of the relationship between local and global, or the internal and external, emerge from these everyday terminological sensitivities. The first is manifest in those statements which claim to find a common sense certainty in designations of national identity, but which do so by defining it as an internal *response* to a threat that is *external*: thus, the exercise of British sovereignty is seen as threatened by EU integration, with its unaccountable, faceless, and fundamentally foreign bureaucracy; calls for a renewal of English nationalism are seen as a response to the assertiveness of Scottish, Welsh, and Irish nationalism; while demands for a return to a properly British (or, sometimes English) culture are presented as a response to the "invasion" of alien cultures brought by migrants who refuse to assimilate and so threaten the national character. From this perspective, the integrity and strength of the "inside" paradoxically derives from the vitality and agency of what is "outside."

A different kind of relationship between global and local, internal and external, is suggested by those more avowedly problematic statements of identity, as for example in the difficulties surrounding the self-identification as English by members of ethnic minorities, even if born and raised in England, or indeed the claim for British national identity by many Protestants in Northern Ireland, even though geographically its six counties are not

MacPhee_00b intro.qxd 5/21/07 6:16 PM Page 3

part of Great Britain. In each case, the problematic nature of such identification points to the involvement of an ostensibly "internal" identity with what is assumed to be "external," and of the "local" with the "global." In the case of many descendants of citizens of former colonies, the difficulty lies in the persistence of racial designations and hierarchies inherited from the British Empire, designations which remained informal and at arm's length while the empire remained intact, but which since its demise have maintained a powerful hold both institutionally and in terms of popular political discourse. In the case of the Protestant community of Northern Ireland, on the other hand, the anxiety expressed by the claim to Britishness has more to do with the perceived need for differentiation from the Irish identity prevalent on the island which they share, as it is to do with a claim of affiliation with the inhabitants of the English shire counties or the suburban boroughs of London. If such troubled articulations suggest that the "external" history of colonialism and imperial expansion continues to inhabit the "internal" space of the nation, so too do these ostensibly confident accounts of British or English identity; for each is premised upon the threat of the foreign and external, indicating that the very "externality" which proves so threatening is somehow already bound up in British and English identity.

What emerges in the slippage between these confident and problematic statements of British national identity is a worrying disavowal of the relationship between local and global, internal and external, in public discourse in the United Kingdom. Contemporary conceptions of Britishness, and perhaps still more Englishness, seem to imply a profound blindness with regard to the involvement of global and local, a blindness which Paul Gilroy argues is premised on an amnesia associated with empire. "Once the history of the empire became a source of discomfort, shame, and perplexity," Gilroy writes, "that unsettling history was diminished, denied, and then if possible, actively forgotten." (Gilroy 2005: 90). Gilroy terms this amnesia "postcolonial melancholia," and argues that it has two disastrous effects: first, "the error of imaging that postcolonial people are only unwanted alien intruders without any substantive historical, political, or cultural connections to the collective life of their fellow subjects" (2005: 90); and second, "the mysterious evacuation of Britain's postcolonial conflicts from national consciousness," which, as Gilroy notes, include not only Palestine, Malaya, Korea, Kenya, Suez, Cyprus, and Ireland, but also two wars in the Persian Gulf within the last decade or so (2005: 89).

If this disavowal of the involvement of local and global has its roots in British imperial history, it is by no means simply a historical phenomenon. A striking example of the contemporary operation of this denial occurred in the wake of the bombings on the London transport system in July 2005. The bombings followed the US invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq in which the UK participated as a subordinate ally, and were initially framed in terms

MacPhee_00b intro.qxd 5/21/07 6:16 PM Page 4

of 9/11 as an incident in the larger "war on terror" declared by the Bush administration. But when it transpired that those responsible for the July bombing were British Muslims, young men who had grown up and participated in the broader multicultural society of the Midlands and North East of England, public discussion was immediately focused by establishment politicians and the mainstream media on the alleged failure of multicultural society in Britain and the need to reassert a unified British identity. This extraordinary turnaround sought to cast the violence as a purely "internal" matter whose cause and remedy are *cultural* rather than *political*. The extent to which the event came to be framed as exclusively domestic was made evident by British Prime Minister Tony Blair's fantastic claim that there was no relationship between the bombings and the participation of British military forces in the invasion of Iraq, despite widespread incredulity and mounting evidence that the bombings took place in the shadow of both internal racism and international policy. As Osama Saeedm of the Muslim Association of Britain observed, public discussion erased "Britain's explicit role in creating the injustices in the Muslim world—from the mess that colonial masters left in Kashmir to the promising of one people's land to another in Palestine." He urged journalists and politicians alike to remember that "[w]hat happens abroad matters to British Muslims as much as what happens here" (Saeedm 2005).

The palpable irony here is not that British Muslims have sought to bring "foreign" and "external" concerns into the domestic arena; after all it was Prime Minister Blair who overrode all political, military, and legal obstacles to pursue the invasion of Iraq and the American "war on terror," arguing that it was central to both international *and* domestic security (see Sands 2005: 174-204). Rather, the irony is that Blair could dismiss this apparently overriding global context at the drop of a hat, as a mere irrelevance beside the wholly internal woes of the beleaguered national community. What powerfully emerges in this instance is the way in which local and global are played off against one another in British political discourse, so that national prestige is gauged in terms of global reach, yet the nation itself is conceived as primary and fundamentally removed from this larger world. At one moment, Britain is at the forefront of a struggle that is understood to be both altruistic and in the national interest; in the next, attempts to trace the very international relationships upon which such an understanding would depend are rendered abstract and tendentious when set against the "common sense" dissatisfaction of middle England with the demands of multicultural society. Here the global serves to obscure the discontents of the local, while the local in turn serves to obscure a global involvement that continues to shape the lives of millions of human beings, albeit as a subordinate partner.[2]

The claim that motivates this volume is that the confusions and anxieties surrounding British national identity—and which emerge in the slip-

MacPhee_00b intro.qxd 5/21/07 6:16 PM Page 5

page between "Britishness" and "Englishness"—are not simply historical curiosities, but may be more broadly illuminating in an era when the intersection of local and global is at once more pervasive than ever and yet acknowledgement of this fact proves increasingly unpalatable within the national polity. British identity is of course not the only European identity powerfully informed and inflected through its colonial history, but it is perhaps unique in registering the continuing relevance of that history in its enduring terminological and conceptual confusions.

Isolating Englishness

The current academic concern with a distinct and identifiable Englishness has grown out of revisionist histories of British national identity, most notably by Linda Colley (1992). What makes this work on British history relevant to the slippage between Britshness and Englishness is its emphasis on the role of the external in the development of a specifically British national identity in the eighteenth century: as Colley writes, "men and women came to define themselves as Britons—in addition to defining themselves in many other ways—because circumstances impressed them with the belief that they were different from those beyond their shores." Colley's extensive historical account points again and again to the role of what are perceived as alien and external entities—whether in the form of French Catholicism or the supposed "savagery" of Native Americans—in the crystallization of a highly flexible, discontinuous, and even contradictory British identity which nonetheless proved to be powerful, popular, and enduring. Indeed, as she explicitly insists, it was "*not so much consensus or homogeneity or centralization at home*, as a strong sense of dissimilarity from those without [that] proved to be the essential cement" (1992: 17; emphasis added). In these terms, the unifying power of Britishness came from its commitment to expansion, a commitment it was able to sustain precisely because its unifying appeal did not require the kind of relinquishment of tradition and local rootedness necessarily demanded by a uniform and centralized identity.

While Colley's account focuses attention on Britishness, it has also had an important impact on the renewal of interest in a specifically English identity. Broadly speaking, there have been two ways in which this strengthened notion of British national identity has fed into discussions of Englishness, the first of which can be seen in Krishnan Kumar's *The Making of English National Identity* (2003), and the second in Ian Baucom's *Out of Place: Englishness, Empire and the Locations of Identity* (1999), and Simon Gikandi's *Maps of Englishness* (1996).

Kumar interprets Colley's emphasis on the connection between British national identity and the imperial expansionism of the eighteenth and

MacPhee_00b intro.qxd 5/21/07 6:16 PM Page 6

nineteenth centuries as implying that Englishness proper—what he terms the "moment of Englishness"—could only occur with the prospect of imperial decline at the beginning of the twentieth century: it was "only when new commercial rivals threatened Britain's industrial supremacy and faith in the empire began to waiver," Kumar writes, "that a degree of self-consciousness began to emerge," so that "*for the first time* an inquiry into the character of the English people as a nation—as a collectivity . . . with a distinct sense of its history, its traditions and its destiny" was initiated (2003: 224; emphasis added). This approach commits Kumar to a strict and absolute terminological distinction between "English" and "British" and a strongly linear and unidirectional chronological scheme: Englishness and Britishness are distinct and should not be conflated or confused, while historically a discrete Britishness precedes an Englishness which only appeared on the scene once the imperial project was perceived to be on the wane. In this view, the terms designate alternate poles, and the one gains strength and currency at the expense of the other in a zero sum game.

At a deeper conceptual level, this approach also commits Kumar to a Britishness whose expansive and supranational commitment to civilization and modernity is fundamentally incompatible with the "narrowly conceived nationalism" signified by Englishness (2003: 194). Thus, while in other instances Kumar accepts that imperialism "can contain [nationalism] and at times be reduced to it," he argues that this was not the case with the British Empire. Rather, he maintains that "for the English, . . . empire offered an identity that lifted them above "mere" nationalist self-glorification," because "for the British generally, the empire was a force for good in the world [and] a means whereby all peoples—or at least many of them—might share in the material progress and moral enlightenment that were, so it was felt, increasingly characterizing Western nations" (2003: 193-94). According to Kumar, "in England . . . for much of the better part of the nineteenth century imperialism trumped nationalism" (2003: 193).

A different conception of the relationship between Britishness and Englishness is pursued by Ian Baucom, which does not envisage a neat separation of terms and epochs but instead locates the power of both terms precisely in their persistent conflation and confusion. Rather than seeing in Colley's account a demand for terminological precision and chronological sequence, Baucom interprets it as demonstrating "that Britishness . . . has consistently constituted itself through a rhetoric of disaffirmation" in which "English men and women simultaneously avow and disavow the British Empire, and in which Englishness, consequently, emerges as at once an embrace and repudiation of what lies beyond it" (1999: 7). Focusing on place and its capacity to underwrite a specific and deeply rooted sense of identification, Baucom looks at how imperial conceptions of Britishness often involved the paradoxical displacement of characteristically English locations and spaces (such as the cricket field, an idealized English countryside, or

MacPhee_00b intro.qxd 5/21/07 6:16 PM Page 7

the public school) from the imperial homeland to the colonial periphery. Thus, the situational specificity of English landscape and architecture—with its freight of experiential association, historical resonance, aesthetic value and political meaning—comes to stand in for and signify the supranational and ostensibly universal claims to progress, civilization, and modernity made by the British imperial project. At the fringes of empire, then, Britishness comes to be articulated through a lexicon of specifically English symbols, locales, histories, and meanings, so that the universal claims of empire are paradoxically narrated through the semantic and emotional particularity of Englishness. For Baucom, imperialism did not so much trump nationalism as merge with it in a deeply paradoxical way, so that imperialism becomes *both* an alternative to *and* a statement of nationalism, while nationalism becomes *both* an alternative to *and* a statement of imperialism.

Where Kumar would view this kind of conflation as a terminological error or conceptual weakness, Baucom instead sees it as enabling a flexible and "open" range of identifications and affiliations that nonetheless sustained a political and cultural hegemony that was decidedly English.[3] Thus, the Scots, Welsh, and Irish soldiers and imperial administrators could see themselves in this way as British (and therefore as also Scots, Welsh, or Irish), and—in some unacknowledged sense—as *somehow English*; and by extension, so too could the white colonists of Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa. However, for the myriad non-white colonial subjects of the colonies, protectorates and other territories, such an identification proved much more problematic.

The uneven and unequal character of this flexible and "open" conflation of identities is explored by Simon Gikandi in his Maps of Englishness (1996), where he recalls familial and communal memories of British imperialism in Kenya. As Gikandi demonstrates, while the identification with a Britishness was in some sense shared both by agents of empire and colonial subjects, its ethnic coding—the "Englishness" of Britishness—also meant that it was always experienced in very different ways. "[T]he Scottish missionary," Gikandi recounts, "would secure his British identity in the service of empire," bringing into alignment local and global identities, and allowing him to feel both modern (British/English) and rooted in tradition (Scottish): but for his Gikuyu congregation, for whom significantly "Scotland and England were the same thing," their accession to Britishness must be bought at the cost "of reading their local narratives not as stories about an autonomous African past but as minor and sometimes undesirable events that had now been transcended by a colonial destiny" (1996: 34-35). What Baucom would identify as the invisible Englishness encoded in British imperial identity, thus allowed Britishness to remain substantially English while nonetheless accommodating (in this case) a Scottish identity whose historical markers and future interests were not (at least logically speaking)

MacPhee_00b intro.qxd 5/21/07 6:16 PM Page 8

necessarily compatible with it. However, for those Gikuyu who sought such an identification—and as Gikandi points out, many *did not*—the ostensible universality proclaimed by Britishness was only accessible through the subordination of the particularity of one tradition to that of another.

The difference between the approaches signaled by Kumar on the one hand, and by Baucom and Gikandi on the other, turns on two different ways of conceiving the relationship between nation and empire. For Kumar, they are distinct and mutually exclusive: either empire incorporates nation or, as in the British case, "imperialism trump[s] nationalism." As such, nationalism emerges in the wake of imperialism, and therefore their interaction is *external* and *negative*, since the internal character of national identity is not substantially shaped or determined by the externality of empire, but is only inhibited in its expression and development. For Baucom and Gikandi, in contrast, empire and nation both conflict with one another *and* mutually inform, reinforce, and shape one another. As Baucom writes, following Arjun Appadurai:

> Englishness has been identified *with* Britishness, which in its turn has been identified as coterminous with and proceeding from the sovereign territory of empire, and . . . Englishness has also defined itself *against* the British Empire, first by retaining a spatial theory of collective identity but privileging the English soil of the "sceptered isle" or, more regularly, certain quintessentially English locales, as its authentic identity-determining locations; and then, intermittently over the decades of imperial rule, but programmatically from the 1960s onward, by largely abandoning spatial and territorial ideologies for a racial "discourse of loyalty" and coidentity. (1999: 12)

The conflation of nation and empire in British national identity generates a cultural discourse in which room is made for the *affective experience* of multiplicity, yet at the same moment, this multiplicity is denied or discounted by a unity that disavows its own act of denial. In this view, the transaction between Britishness and Englishness is not a one-time event—Kumar's "moment of Englishness"—but an ongoing process whose terms are constantly being renegotiated. Kumar is not wrong, then, in identifying *a* "moment of Englishness" at the beginning of the twentieth century, but in conceiving of it as the first and only such moment (2003: 176).

This concern for the conflation of imperial and national within British national identity speaks to each of the various moments and locations addressed in this volume; yet if it offers a valuable approach, Baucom is himself open about its limits as an interpretative framework. Arguing that "the dialectical estrangements of Englishness [must] become more than a banal metaphor for 'diversity,'" he concedes that a turn to "the local does not necessarily imply a turn to the emancipatory." Baucom's warning that the invocation of "multiplicity is not enough" returns us to the response to the London bombings mentioned above, in which the attempt to identify a po-

MacPhee_00b intro.qxd 5/21/07 6:16 PM Page 9

litical framework for this event was obscured by the insistence on its character as a *purely cultural* problem—the supposed failure of multicultural society—rather than the *political* question of Western involvement in the Middle East (1999: 221). The point is not that the cultural must be subordinated to the political, but rather that the interrelationship of the cultural and the political itself needs to be thematized. If each of the moments and locations examined in this volume point to ways in which British national identity allows an emotional or affective experience of particularity and multiplicity while simultaneously denying it, then together they suggest the need to examine the relationship between the immediacy of cultural experience and the less immediate level of the political which the cultural both illuminates and obscures. The remainder of this introduction will consider one attempt to think the political and economic coordinates of imperialism and the nation-state, namely that made by Hannah Arendt in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* ([1951] 1973).

Nation and Empire

In *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, Arendt presents an account of the development of the nation-state in which imperialism is not an external factor or an afterthought, but an integral and internally constitutive moment. In contrast to Kumar's demand for a tidy conceptual separation, she identifies the "confusion of imperialism and nationalism" as a key moment in the development of the European nation-state (Arendt 1973: 153). However, within the framework of her understanding of the dynamic of imperialism, this development at one and the same time marks "the decline of the nation-state" (Arendt 1973: 267).

The broader terms of Arendt's account are based on the intersection of two antagonistic vectors. The first emerges from her understanding of the nation-state as an (albeit adulterated) *political* space, comprising a relatively open if restricted public sphere.[4] Despite real limitations, the political space of the nation-state is characterized by formal structures of legality that allow for an element of recognition and negotiation—even if uneven and unequal—between a plurality of different political actors. To the extent that the nation-state approximates to what Arendt would conceive of as a properly political space, it implies a level of respect for enduring patterns of social differentiation and some recognition of a "national" or public interest in contradistinction to the imperatives of the private realm.

The second vector emerges from Arendt's recognition that the nation-state is at one and the same time a function of the emergence of the bourgeoisie as a class. For Arendt, the bourgeois are determined by economic or "private" imperatives that are ultimately incompatible with the public interest of the national-political, yet they have an economic power with the

MacPhee_00b intro.qxd 5/21/07 6:16 PM Page 10

potential to subordinate the fragile political sphere of the nation-state to these private imperatives. In contrast to the bounded character of the national-political, which requires the maintenance of discrete and enduring limits, distinctions, and borders (and therefore, albeit in a restricted form, of the plurality and particularity necessary for human community), the economic functions according to the imperative of "expansion for expansion's sake" (Arendt 1973: 126) whose "logical consequence is the destruction of . . . [the] stabilizing forces which stand in the way of constant transformation and expansion" (Arendt 1973: 137-38). Arendt's account of modern politics is thus underpinned by "the inner contradiction between the two principles" of nation and imperialism, where the latter is understood as marking the illegitimate and highly destructive importation of the economic into the political.

This picture is complicated in turn by Arendt's broader understanding of the social transformations incumbent on Western modernity. The economic imperative of expansion increasingly finds itself limited by the nation-state, and therefore seeks markets and opportunities for accumulation beyond the discrete borders that curtail the nation-state's jurisdiction and sphere of direct intervention. Yet at the same time, a range of contradictory developments collide in order to destabilize the national-political sphere and undermine its capacity to adjudicate the public interest, including the growth of class conflict, the social and economic atomization of market relationships, and the increasingly "national" character of the nation-state itself—i.e., the unfolding consequences of its ethnic self-identification, as opposed to the properly political basis of the "political state."

While the bourgeois had largely abstained from the public concerns of politics in favor of its "private" economic interest, the economic increasingly came to demand expansion, and in turn, the subordination of the state to the role of safeguarding this expansion. As a result, the privately minded bourgeois came to claim a "public" or "political" role. Despite the fundamental incompatibility of the national-political and the economic-imperial, the instability increasingly experienced by the nation-state led to a powerful propensity across different sectors of society to identify the *public* interest of the national-political with the *private* imperatives of the bourgeoisie. In the individual and atomized experience of modernity, the very privateness of the bourgeois economic imperative could paradoxically provide the appearance of universality, especially once articulated through the language of nation and race (Arendt 1973: 152-53). As a result, imperialism rapidly came to be regarded as the "panacea" for all the ills of the nation-state (Arendt 1973: 151). "In theory," Arendt writes, "there is an abyss between nationalism and imperialism"; but "in practice," she observes, "it can and has been bridged by tribal nationalism and outright racism" (1973: 153).

MacPhee_00b intro.qxd 5/21/07 6:16 PM Page 11

While Arendt sees these developments as having been operable across Europe in the nineteenth century, she sees them functioning in very different ways according to the social, economic, and political character of the different national polities.[5] The most consistent and logically coherent attempt to square imperialism and the nation-state emerged in France in the wake of the French Revolution. The drive to align the national-political with imperialism in France generated a sustained attempt to coordinate the formal legality of the nation-state with the expansionism of empire. For Arendt, it was preeminently the French who:

> attempted to develop the body politic of the nation into an imperial political structure, [and to] believ[e] that "the French nation (was) marching . . . to spread the benefits of French civilization"; they wanted to incorporate overseas possessions into the national body by treating the conquered peoples as "both . . . brothers and . . . subjects—brothers in the fraternity of French civilization, and subjects in that they were disciples of French light and followers of French leading." (1973: 129)

This characterization of the French attempt "to build an empire in the old Roman sense" is not, however, seen as having had benign consequences; indeed, the reverse. "The result of this daring enterprise," Arendt remarks ironically, "was a particularly brutal exploitation of overseas possessions for the sake of the nation," since it put the full force of the nation behind the imperialist project, while conversely placing the full resources of colonial possessions at the nation's call (1973: 129).

In contrast to the French experience, Arendt sees in British imperialism a more confused, rationally less consistent, but ultimately more "successful" model—successful, that is, from the viewpoint of the imperialists. The central distinction between them lay in the relatively greater separation between national institutions and the colonial administration. Thus, while the British colonial administrators were subject to the same predilection for "administrative massacre" and other "radical means of pacification" as the French, the stronger distinction between national-political and imperial-bureaucracy tended to restrain their full implementation, and they remained a relatively marginal, although by no means absent, method of colonial rule (Arendt 1973: 134).[6]

The point of Arendt's distinction here works at three levels: at the cultural, the political, and at the level of the future direction of decolonization. At the more familiar cultural level, this distinction between the domestic and the colonial shaped the selfperception of the universal, civilizing, and modernizing mission that was common to all imperial bureaucracies. But where French imperialism openly identified its modernizing and civilizing project with the nation-state, making the colonial subject at least theoretically French once they had assimilated into the French

MacPhee_00b intro.qxd 5/21/07 6:16 PM Page 12

nation, "the British tried to escape the dangerous inconsistency inherent in the nation's attempt at empire building" through a highly contradictory and inconsistent set of strategies. A layer of its colonial subjects were encouraged to identify with British culture as civilized and modern, yet the possibility of full assimilation was nonetheless withdrawn since this very same culture was coded as racially and ethnically English. The majority of the "conquered peoples," on the other hand, were left "to their own devices as far as culture, religion and law were concerned," so that British administrators "stay[ed] aloof and . . . refrain[ed] from spreading British law and culture" (1973: 130). This "aloofness"—which Arendt saw as particularly dangerous (1973: 212)—allowed British imperialism to hold onto its claims to be "universal," "progressive," and "civilizing," while at the same time largely restricting British identity to colonial administrators and white settlers. Paradoxically, Arendt observes, "the colonies . . . were to become the very backbone of British nationalism," because "in the domination of distant countries and the rule over strange peoples" the colonial bureaucracy "discovered . . . the only way to serve British, and nothing but British interests" (1973: 154). Although her account does not employ the terminological distinction between British and English that we have used to designate the supranational and national, it nonetheless provides the terms of this paradox.

The political consequences of this "confusion of imperialism and nationalism" form the heart of Arendt's discussion of the political significance of imperialism in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, for it is at this level that their incompatibility was most profound, and the retroactive power of empire upon the nation-state most destructive and enduring (1973: 153). Arendt is primarily concerned with two long-term processes, the first relating to the institutional and juridical reordering of the national-political space by imperialism, and the second relating to the resulting alliance between what she terms "capital" and "the mob." Together they constitute the powerful and highly damaging "boomerang effect of imperialism upon the homeland," a phenomenon that lead to the "decline of the nation-state" (Arendt 1973: 155).

According to Arendt, "The first consequence of power export" beyond the bounds of the nation-state "was that the state's instruments of violence, the police and the army, which in the framework of the nation existed beside, and were controlled by, other national institutions, were separated from this body and promoted to the position of national representatives" (Arendt 1973: 136). The redirection of public power to pursue the private economic interests of the bourgeoisie thus reformulates the very nature of public and private in the most damaging ways possible, corroding the legal supervision of the nation-state's increasingly massive capacity for violence and "liberating" the bureaucracies of coercion and

MacPhee_00b intro.qxd 5/21/07 6:16 PM Page 13

surveillance associated with the police and military functions of the state. In these terms, the most powerful and dangerous instruments of the state increasingly become exempt from legal and political supervision, becoming instead the province of a largely autonomous and quasi-private bureaucracy operating for the most part beyond the purview of the nation's public sphere. The nation-state's commitment to imperialism therefore tends toward the etiolation of the legal and democratic elements of the national-political space and the growing autonomy of an expanding bureaucracy, so that legality is increasingly replaced by administrative regulation and bureaucratic decree (Arendt 1973: 215-16).[7]

The second consequence of the conflation of nation and empire for Arendt takes the form of a political alliance between the two "superfluous" sections of domestic society—the owners of capital, and those sections of all classes who no longer find a secure location within the national polity, or what Arendt calls "the mob" (1973: 155). What underpins the conflation of nation and empire, as we have seen, is the misrecognition of bourgeois expansion—which is for Arendt fundamentally private in character—as the *public good*. Consequently, the conception of "community" or "the public" which this misrecognition gives rise to is particularly impoverished at the political level, but compensates at the experiential level through its valorization of the mysterious, ineffable, and emotional character of national identity and belonging, a mystery that finds its ultimate expression in the fantasies of "race thinking" (Arendt 1973: 158-61).

Thus, although ostensibly expanding the remit of the nation, the confusion of imperialism and nationalism in fact results in the degradation of the substantive framework of the national-political characterized by legality, constitutionality, and publicity, the strengthening of the supranational force of the economic and of the extrademocratic and quasi-private power of the bureaucracy, and the increasing role of "tribal nationalism" and racism as a basis for national belonging (Arendt 1973: 153, 267). Together, these elements presage the "decline of the nation-state," which in certain circumstances—notably Germany, Italy, and France—would give rise to powerful fascist movements. According to Arendt, the British nation-state was "insulated" from the seduction of fascism by the comparatively wider separation between nation and empire, which "drew a sharp line between colonial methods and normal domesticate policies"; as a result, the "new alliance between the much-too-rich and the much-too-poor" which underwrote fascism "remained confined to overseas possessions" (1973: 155). Yet if the conflation of nation and empire generated the potential for "totalitarian government on the basis of racism" in the imperial possessions, Arendt finds to her surprise that this is not the likely course of British decolonization. "The stage seemed to have been set for all possible horrors," she remarks, but argues that while "British imperial rule sank to some level of vulgarity, cruelty played a lesser role between the two World Wars and

MacPhee_00b intro.qxd 5/21/07 6:16 PM Page 14

human rights were always safeguarded." It is this "moderation in the midst of insanity" that underlies Arendt's anticipation that decolonization "may turn out to mean the transformation of the English nation into a Commonwealth of English peoples" (1973: 221).

However, Arendt's unqualified optimism here risks the forgetting of her own most powerful insights, smoothing them over within a progressive scheme that erases her diagnosis of the "decline of the nation-state." Rather than regarding decolonization as the end of the interplay between nation and empire, within the terms of her own account it must also be regarded as the moment when the separation of nation and empire—which for Arendt had been such an important barrier or "insulation" against the corroding effects of imperial expansion—is broken down, so that the reflux of empire is felt *more powerfully* within the bounds of the nation-state. In assessing Arendt's projection today we have of course the advantage of hindsight; but as well as factoring in the course of a history she was not privy to, we must also examine the consistency of Arendt's own thinking.

Arendt's optimism is certainly understandable. Not only did Britain escape the immediate appeal of fascism in the 1930s, but in the wake of the national sacrifice and struggle of war, a new sense of collective responsibility appeared to strengthen the public character of the nation-state while mitigating its purely "national" character—a collective responsibility expressed at home in the social democratic consensus and the welfare state, and abroad in active participation in building the new structures of international legality. But this renovation of aspects of the nation-state did not necessarily reverse the deepseated tendencies identified by Arendt in her account of the decline of the nation-state, whether at the institutional level or at the level of consciousness and affect. Just as the erosion of democratic accountability and the growth of the quasi-private military and security apparatus remained unchecked—and indeed accelerated under the imperatives of first the Cold War and then more recently the "war on terror"—so the habits of race-thinking and the imperial bureaucrat's mindset of aloofness were reimported directly from colonial periphery back into the space of the nation. And while decolonization involved the withdrawal of much of the colonial apparatus, it did not of course mean isolation from the global; if anything it meant the reverse. From the viewpoint of the Olympian British bureaucrat, the new global hegemony of the US is at once the scene of humiliation and the only opportunity for retaining prestige, while for the institutional investor it is more straightforwardly the prerequisite for maximizing profit. The incremental subordination of national policy to this vision of globalization over the last two decades has stripped away many of the gains made in rejuvenating the national-political in the immediate postwar period, while the resulting economic insecurity and social atomization threatens the very real achievement of an emergent multicultural society.

MacPhee_00b intro.qxd 5/21/07 6:16 PM Page 15

Arendt's account of imperialism in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* is valuable both because it suggests a way of relating the cultural to the political, and because it understands the inconsistent and contradictory character of national identity. However, Arendt's optimism about the future of decolonization forgets her own account of the decline of the nation-state, and uncharacteristically wagers that the erosion of the national-political can simply be wished away. But as she makes clear in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, her analysis of imperialism was always motivated by a concern for the ways in which it would shape the future development of modern politics; indeed, she saw imperialism as a *beginning*, arguing against Lenin that it was not "the last stage of capitalism" but "the first stage in [the] political rule of the bourgeoisie" (1973: 138). In this light, we argue the contradictions, slippages, and inconsistencies in British national identity that are traced in different moments and contexts in this volume testify both to the deep-seated nature of the impact of empire and its continuing relevance for thinking British national identity.

Englishness and Invisibility

One way of thinking about the implications of Arendt's political analysis for the question of British national identity is in terms of appearance. Nationalism is always a curious configuration of appearing and disappearing, as Benedict Anderson indicates in his characterization of the nation as an "imagined community": for as Anderson observes, "the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members," they will not see them "*face-to-face*," and "yet in the minds of each lives the *image* of their communion" (B. Anderson 1983: 15; emphasis added). The national flag exemplifies this combination of display *and* disappearance, for as a flag it signals *the* nation, and yet its apparent unity as image and object hides the multiple differences which inhabit the nation, and the many connections and relationships which reach beyond it.

In the case of the European conflation of nation and empire, this combination of appearance and disappearance carries a complex semantic and affective load, as Roland Barthes famously pointed out in his analysis of the "myth" of the French flag in "Myth Today" ([1957] 1982). In Barthes' example, what appears on the cover of *Paris Match* is not the flag itself, but the black soldier saluting it, an image whose mythic charge asserts "that France is a great empire, that all her sons, without color discrimination, faithfully serve under her flag, and that there is no better answer to the detractors of an alleged colonialism than the zeal shown by this Negro in serving his so-called oppressors" (Barthes 1982: 101-2). In Barthes' terms, this is a "myth" because it naturalizes—or makes invisible *while keeping in plain*

MacPhee_00b intro.qxd 5/21/07 6:16 PM Page 16

sight—the contradictions of its "concept," which signifies the openness and universality of France-the-empire through the display of the exclusive character of France-the-nation. After all, the power of the image depends not on it picturing a French soldier saluting the national flag, but on the fact that it is a "French soldier" who is *visibly* "not French." In the Union Jack (which combines the crosses of St. George, St. Andrew, and St. Patrick), the particularity of England is at once displayed in the cross of St. George, and disavowed in the visual equality accorded to the crosses of St. Andrew and St. Patrick, which so visibly contradicts the cultural and political inequality that structures the United Kingdom.

This configuration of appearance and disappearance, visibility and invisibility, is not static, but presents a highly mobile and deeply contradictory pattern of permutations which, in the case of British national identity, is not reducible to a neat conceptual distinction between British and English. In the present context, the resurgence of English nationalism does not simply replace a properly British national identity, but functions in tandem with it in order to generate new configurations of appearance/disappearance. In particular, it plays a powerful role in the forgetting of empire by narrowing the horizon of national memory to that of a "medium-sized European nation," an England of the local and the particular as against the globally expansive British Empire. The false modesty of this gesture, in which Britain is reinvented as a number of "colonially innocent" locales from which empire and decolonization have been evacuated, enables Englishness to assume the pose of victimhood: no longer representative of mastery and power but the perennial loser at the hands of Scottish, Welsh, and Irish nationalisms, the bureaucrats of the EU, and the "bogus asylum-seekers" whose presence on "our" shores is as unexpected as it is unwanted. Under the guise of this "new Englishness," British nationalists can now "be like everybody else" in the sense that they can imagine the postimperial state as the innocent victim of the unjust and unprovoked oppression of external power, while at the same time reveling in Britain's status as one of the best armed and largest economies on the earth, whose continuing global political power is institutionalized in a seat at the UN Security Council.

An exemplary articulation of this "new Englishness" is provided by a speech to the Institute for Public Policy Research, entitled *A New England: An English Identity within Britain*, by the British MP and former minister David Blunkett, which cites Kumar's account of the beleaguered and neglected status of English nationalism as its occasion and justification (Blunkett 2005: 6).[8] Its description of the English as "an open, trading and enterprising people who have traveled the world and given it great science, literature and sport" at once claims too little and too much, airbrushing away the history of imperialism through an understatement whose modesty is exorbitantly egotistical (Blunkett 2005: 12). More worrying still is the

MacPhee_00b intro.qxd 5/21/07 6:16 PM Page 17

fact that through a rhetorical sleight of hand, cosmopolitanism and the commitment to multicultural society have become "extremes" against which a common sense "new Englishness" stands as a bulwark (Blunkett 2005: 4). Unmentioned in the speech, however, are the implications of this new nationalism for the nation-state's residual political architecture of rights, legality, and constitutionality, even though as interior minister in the Labour government Blunkett presided over the Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act (2001)—which as A. Sivanandan points out "effectively abolished habeas corpus for foreign nationals" (2005)—and the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act (2002), which was judged by the cross-party parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to contravene provisions of the UN Refugee Convention of 1951 (Joint Committee on Human Rights 2004). The new nationalism, then, not only obscures the ongoing erosion of the national-political—in the form of the attack on fundamental domestic rights and the incremental privatization of the public sphere—but also the degradation of the nascent structures of international law. This suggests that Arendt's assessment of the decline of the nation-state gains a renewed significance in an increasingly globalized environment, where a hollowed-out "nationalism" at once undermines the national-political, while at the same time restricting the purview of popular concern so that emerging international legal structures—which might safeguard human rights across nation-states—are framed as external to the national debate.

However, the contradictions in the postimperial state of the nation are nowhere more evident than in the extraordinary identification in Britain at both a popular and a bureaucratic level with American military power. And it is here that the paradoxical and irrational character of nationalism as both a cognitive discourse *and* an arena of affective investment appears most starkly. For example, as George Monbiot notes, British involvement in a European Union military force—in which the UK has extensive political input and decision-making powers, including elected members of the European Parliament—has faced widespread and often hysterical condemnation as presaging the collapse of British national sovereignty in the nationalist media.[9] Yet, according to the then defense minister Geoff Hoon, the new British strategic doctrine requires British armed forces to be "structured and equipped" according to American strategic requirements because "it is highly unlikely that the United Kingdom would be engaged in large-scale combat operations without the United States." As Monbiot points out, although the new strategic logic formally requires that the British "military [should] become functionally subordinate to that of another nation" within which the UK has no constitutional, institutional, or democratic decision-making role, there has been no outcry from the nationalist media or the traditionally nationalistic Conservative party (2003). More recently the Labour government has railroaded through the renewal

MacPhee_00b intro.qxd 5/21/07 6:16 PM Page 18

of the Trident "independent" nuclear weapons system, which Britain buys from the US, while offering Yorkshire as a key location for the US National Missile Defense System. Far from representing isolated incidents, this conflation of British nationalism with the global power of the US is codified by an editorial in *The Daily Telegraph* of London as the ninth of "ten core values of British identity," which declares that the attacks of 9/11 "were not simply an attack on a *foreign nation*; they were an attack on the *anglosphere*" (2005; emphasis added). In the context of the paper's wider coverage, this mysterious neologism presumably refers to the US and the UK (and perhaps Australia), rather than say Jamaica or those other nations which according to the same editorial once "prospered under colonial rule," but whose people are unhappily no longer "infected by the self-belief of the British Empire" (*Daily Telegraph* 2005).[10]

In the light of Arendt's account of imperialism and the decline of the nation-state, the contradictions underlying this "nationalist" identification with the global military hegemon can be recognized as the continuing legacy of the conflation of nation and empire. "Only when exported money succeeded in stimulating the export of power could it accomplish its owners' designs," Arendt writes; but conversely, "[o]nly the unlimited accumulation of power could bring about the unlimited accumulation of capital" (1973: 137). Thus, once the spatially limited nation is subordinated to the limitless expansionism of empire, identification with the national is in turn subordinated to *identification with power itself*. Now that the promise of unlimited power held out by the British Empire has drained away, the "new Englishness" seeks to sustain this identification with power in the guise of a "modest" and "responsible" nationalism that is compatible with the language of universality associated with freedom, democracy, and human rights. But as the *Daily Telegraph*'s identification of "all . . . who believe in freedom, justice and the rule of law" with "the anglosphere" indicates, such "universality" remains ethnically and racially coded.

The essays collected in this volume do not present a unified thesis or adopt a single theoretical viewpoint, yet each in some way engages with the conflation of nation and empire signaled by Englishness and its coding of British national identity. The first part deals with the experience of that conflation at various locations and at different moments during the epoch of imperialism itself. Thus, for both Enda Duffy writing about Ireland and Vivian Bickford-Smith writing about South Africa, the neat distinction between "British" and "English" collapses into a highly contradictory—yet for that, an extremely powerful—discourse of identification which not only defines the Britisher but also the other in complex and unexpected ways. Prem Poddar focuses on a significant moment—the reflux after the Indian Rebellion of 1857—when the contradiction between nationalism and imperialism is brought to a head over the issuing of a British passport to imperial subjects, generating an anxious attempt to straddle universalism and

MacPhee_00b intro.qxd 5/21/07 6:16 PM Page 19

xenophobia that powerfully anticipates contemporary hypocrisy over asylum. Geoffrey Nash, on the other hand, scrutinizes the physiognomy of this contradictory Englishness for fissures that might enable an identification with the other, in the shape of the emergent Middle Eastern nationalisms of the early twentieth century. Graham MacPhee questions the insights into imperialism of that self-identified Englishman, Joseph Conrad, by reading the disappearance of the Irish context of political violence in his novel *The Secret Agent* (1907) in the light of Arendt's conception of the erosion of the national-political and the increasing opacity of the security apparatus.

The second part focuses on the postcolonial and postimperial world, where the contradictions between nation and empire can no longer be kept overseas but penetrate the homeland with increasing violence. Sheila Ghose examines two different attempts to manage or assimilate the specter of disenchanted British Asian youth in the wake of the London bombings of July 2005. Comparing the tabloid discourse of the "Brit Bomber" with the homegrown fundamentalist of Hanif Kureishi's fiction, she finds that while Kureishi's liberal perspective may seek to counter the aggressive fantasies of right-wing populism, it remains tied to notions of British national identity that cannot accommodate the experience it seeks to narrate. Bridget Byrne and Colin Wright both examine the unfolding contradictions of British national identity, with Byrne focusing on the lived experience of Englishness by women in London, and Wright focusing on the political rhetorics of the Labour and Conservative parties. Fittingly, Matthew Hart concludes this volume by shifting the analysis of British national identity to the Financial District of New York, where he explores the increasingly prevalent strain of mourning within Englishness as instanced by the proposed memorial garden for British victims of 9/11. Hart argues the memorial is primarily concerned to elide the economic and political inequalities that characterize the so-called "special relationship" between the US and UK, and so the memorial tailors its representation of British national identity to fit this larger, supranational imperative.

MacPhee_00b intro.qxd 5/21/07 6:16 PM Page 20

Notes

1. For a fuller exploration of the intricacies of the ethnic and racial coding of British national identity, see Parekh (2000) and Bridget Byrne's essay in this volume.
2. This incident should serve as a warning against the tendency—best exemplified by the writings of George Orwell—to fall back on an English "localism" to set against what are simplistically conceived as the "abstractions" of state and nation: such a "local" is of course no less abstract in its own way. For a perceptive critique of Orwell, see Williams (1981), and for a critique of Williams in turn see Viswanathan (1991).
3. Which is to say, a restricted and class-bound notion of Englishness.
4. Like Hegel, Arendt's thought distinguishes between the "nation-state," based on an ethnic or linguistic identity, and the "political state," within which membership is a political act rather than simply an inherited condition. While the nation-state involves a political realm, for both Arendt and Hegel it is significantly compromised by its national character, and therefore the properly political state is to be preferred; see Tsao (2004). This important distinction associated with Hegel is largely ignored in English speaking accounts of nationalism and the modern state.
5. Arendt's focus on the second half of the nineteenth century tends to downplay the significance of the European slave trade for the interaction of nation and empire, which has significant repercussions for her engagement with the US; see MacPhee (2007).
6. Arendt's judgment needs to be qualified in the light of ongoing historical research into British colonial violence. For example, recently there has been considerable scholarly interest in the extent and systematic nature of British violence in Kenya in the postwar period; see, for example, David Anderson (2005) and Elkins (2005).
7. Specifically, in the British context Arendt identifies "imperialism [as] the chief cause of the degeneration of the two-party system into the Front Bench system, which led to 'a diminution of the power of opposition' in Parliament and to a growth of [the] 'power of the Cabinet as against the House of Commons'" (Arendt 1973: 153). Thus, the substantive degradation of democratic structures which Arendt has in mind may well occur without necessarily affecting the appearance of *formal* democracy and legality, at least for the majority of its citizens.
8. This is not to say that Kumar's argument is designed intentionally to endorse the positions of Blunkett and other "new English" nationalists; it is, however, to point out that unless conceptual categories are thought through carefully they will, in Walter Benjamin's words, "allow factual material to be manipulated in the interests" of those seeking to undermine legality and constitutionality (Benjamin 2002: 101-2).
9. This is not to underestimate the democratic deficit in the European Union, and in particular the marginal status of the European Parliament in contrast to the power of the EU Commission and the Council of Ministers.
10. The neologism "anglosphere" echoes Niall Ferguson's awkward euphemism for imperialism, "Anglobalization," which he defines as "globalization as it was promoted by Great Britain and her colonies"(2002: xxiii); on this logic, the transatlantic slave trade might become "labor mobility as promoted by Great Britain and her colonies." Like Roland Barthes' myth, Ferguson's rebranding of British imperial history both displays and obscures its tendentious character through its contracted form.

MacPhee_00b intro.qxd 5/21/07 6:16 PM Page 21

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